Haverford College - Department of Economics

ECON377 - JUNIOR RESEARCH SEMINAR: POLITICAL ECONOMY
Spring Term 2018

SYLLABUS

Course Description
This is a seminar course in political economy. The focus is on critical reading of seminal works and developing students own research skills. Topics covered include: (i) models of elections and application of voting models to redistributive policies, (ii) legislative bargaining, (iii) interest groups and lobbying, (iv) constitutions and federalism. (v) information, cheap talk and communication, and (vi) dynamic political economy with applications to democratization and debt.

Instructor
Giri Parameswaran
Email: gparames@haverford.edu
Office Location: 217, Chase Hall
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 1:30pm-3:30pm by Appointment

Texts
Most of the material in this course will involve reading journal articles (see reading list, below). For students who desire an additional resource, the following texts are quite helpful:


An electronic copy of Obsorne (an older edition) will be available on Moodle. Students who have not taken a course in game theory would be advised to review the following: Chapter 2 (pp. 11-35), Chapter 4 (pp. 105-112) and Chapter 5 (pp. 151-170). Chapters 3 and 6 provide additional examples that might prove useful, and Chapter 9 discusses game theory with imperfect information.

Prerequisites
ECON300, MATH118 (MATH121 is desirable),
This course is intended as part of the Mathematical Economics concentration and is most suitable for students who enjoy theoretical and analytic approaches to economics.

Structure of Seminar
The seminar will be structured around student presentations of the readings. Each class, a student will each give a 45-60 minute presentation on a paper from the reading list, followed by class discussion. All students must be prepared to discuss the assigned readings, even if they are not presenting. Presentations should seek to both explain the main ideas of the paper, and to critically evaluate these. The presenter should meet with the instructor in the days before the his/her presentation to discuss the paper. Students should expect to present 4-5 times over the course of the semester.
Occasionally, in lieu of a presenting a paper, we will consider a recent issue of interest and collectively build a model to help explain the observed outcomes/curosities. To complement these sessions, students will be assigned model building exercises (in pairs) twice during the semester, which will be turned in during class.

At the end of the semester, students must submit a term-paper that can be one of four things: (i) a review of the literature on a specific topic in political economy, (ii) an extension of an existing paper in political economy, (iii) a critique of an existing paper in political economy, or (iv) an original model. The term paper will be due on the final day of the exam period.

**Assessment**
Student evaluation will be based on presentations (40%), model-building exercises (20%), term paper (40%).

**Course Outline & Required Readings**

**Week 1** Social Choice Theory, Single-Peakedness
- Introductory lecture notes (see Moodle)
- Game Theory review.

**Week 2:** Voter Turnout

**Week 3:** Probabilistic Voting

**Week 4:** Retrospective Voting
Week 5: Redistribution and the Laffer Curve

Week 6: Social Justice and Redistribution
- Modelling Exercise # 1

Week 7: Legislative Bargaining

Week 8: Bargaining and Lobbying
- Modelling Exercise # 2

Week 9: Nations, Politics and Secession

Week 10: Information
- Modelling Exercise # 3

Week 11: Information
Review, 23-35.

Week 12: Information: Cheap Talk and Expertise
- Modelling Exercise # 4

Week 13: Federalism

Week 14: Dynamic Political Economy